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ABSTRACT

The Regents of New York State propose affirmative action to provide equal opportunity for women and to eliminate discriminatory practices in the educational system. The Regents proposals focus on (1) recruitment and promotion of women in professional and managerial positions in education; (2) ending sexual stereotyping in the elementary and secondary schools through changes in instructional material, inservice training of educational personnel, and assuring that all courses of study are available to girls and boys; and (3) providing equal opportunity for women as students and faculty members in higher education. (HS)

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITY for WOMEN

A Statement of Policy and Proposed Action by the
REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
ALBANY
APRIL 1972

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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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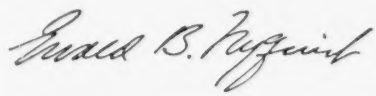
EWALD B. NYQUIST

FOREWORD

New York State is committed to providing equal educational and employment opportunities for women. Despite some progress in insuring women equal protection under State and Federal laws, there is still deep-rooted discrimination against women in our society.

In this paper the Regents propose affirmative action to provide equal opportunity for women and to eliminate discriminatory practices in our educational system. The Regents proposals focus on (1) recruitment and promotion of women in professional and managerial positions in education; (2) ending sexual stereotyping in the elementary and secondary schools through changes in instructional material, inservice training of educational personnel, and assuring that all courses of study are available to girls and boys, and (3) providing equal opportunity for women as students and faculty members in higher education.

I join with the Regents in urging the educational community in New York State to take the initiative now to extend to women their full share of educational and employment opportunities.



EWALD B. NYQUIST
President of the University and
Commissioner of Education

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN

Educational institutions must take the lead in providing equal opportunity for women. This message is being sent to the educational leaders in New York State to suggest ways that this goal may be accomplished.

There is now an intense awareness of women's rights and problems. Some progress has been made to insure women equal protection under State and Federal law, but there is still a long way to go in correcting the most serious inequities that women face, particularly with respect to education, jobs, and earnings.

Career Patterns for Women

Career patterns for women have changed very little over the years. Most women are employed in a few occupations. They are saleswomen, clerical workers, and hold service jobs (a broad category which includes such jobs as hotel, restaurant, and hospital employees, and domestic servants). Better educated women tend to be teachers, nurses, and librarians. The number of women in most other professions, particularly the licensed professions, is very small. In the field of medicine, for example, women comprise only 7 percent of the doctors, but they are numerous in the lower paid nursing, lab technician, and therapist jobs.

Women generally earn much less than men, and the gap has widened in recent years.* Comparing median annual income of women and men in all occupational classifications who work full-time year round, women earned 64 percent of what men received in 1955; in 1968 women were paid only 58 percent of what men earned. Three-fifths of the women but only one-fifth of the men working full time all year round earned less than $5,000. At the other end of the scale, 28 percent of the men but only 3 percent of the women earned $10,000 or more a year.

As these figures show, women have a disproportionate share of low-paying jobs. They are often over-qualified for their work and do not get the same economic return on their education as men. In general, women with some college education earn less than men whose education was limited to elementary school. Even where men and women are in the same job category, men are usually better paid.

* Fact Sheet on the Earnings Gap, U.S. Dept. of Labor, Feb. 1970.

Women hold relatively few positions of leadership. In business, industry, the professions, politics, and civil service — in nearly every occupation — men have most of the top jobs. This is the result of bias against women in positions of leadership. Another reason why men have the best jobs is that most women work at jobs which offer few chances for advancement, and many more men than women are encouraged to seek careers in those fields where the most prestigious positions of leadership are found.

Women have lost ground in the professional and technical fields from the position they held thirty years ago. Forty-five percent of all professional and technical positions were in the hands of women in 1940. In 1970, when the proportion and number of women in the total labor force had risen sharply over the earlier date, women held only 39 percent of these positions, and women were in the lowest paying jobs. In 1969, the median annual wage for men in the professional and technical fields was $11,266 and for women, only $7,309.

Moreover, men are taking over the leadership where women once predominated — in the elementary and secondary schools, in social work, and in the libraries. This is particularly true in the educational system. The facts clearly demonstrate the limited number of women in positions of educational leadership. In New York State, where women in 1970–71 constituted 58.7 percent of the professional staff of the public schools, 99.6 percent of the superintendents and 98.2 percent of the district principals were men. (Only one woman holds the job in each of these categories.) Few women are principals; only 21.1 percent in the elementary schools, 4.6 percent in the middle schools, 8.0 percent in the junior highs, and 2.6 percent in the senior highs.

There are few women in decision-making positions in the colleges and universities. Even in the women's colleges, which were once the bastions of female leadership in higher education, men are being selected as presidents and deans. Few women faculty become full professors; most are concentrated in the lower academic ranks and are paid in each rank at a lower rate than men.

Sexual Stereotypes

Most women are held back because of deep-rooted beliefs about the proper roles of men and women in our society. Some jobs (usually the lowest paid ones) are believed to be suitable for women, and women are channeled into them. Other jobs go almost exclusively to men because they fit ingrained conceptions of what men are best

qualified to do. Boys and girls learn very early in life from their toys, their games, what they see on TV, and the way adults treat them to conform to what is considered typical of their sex.

In many ways, schools reinforce sexual stereotypes which limit women's aspirations and thwart the full development of their talents. So strong is the conditioning of children that work in the crafts is the province of men, that few women even try to enter these fields. The same is true in mathematics and science — girls are not expected to think logically or understand scientific principles, and most girls give up on these fields early in school. In our society, girls are not expected to be interested in how things are put together or even in how the appliances that they use every day work. Vocational training in the technical fields which would prepare girls for satisfying and good-paying work is often denied to them.

The cultural attitudes taught to children which assume a less significant status for women in careers other than homemaking tend to perpetuate discrimination against women. In many of the readers and texts used in the schools, women are portrayed as passive beings engaged exclusively in stereotyped female occupations. Men do exciting things, work at interesting jobs, and solve problems. Children do not read about working mothers or female heads of households, which is the reality that many of them know at home.

In higher education, quotas on women and higher standards of admission for women than men indicate widespread bias. Graduate and professional schools have particularly poor records in admitting women and awarding them higher degrees.

Affirmative Action

There is clearly a great deal that needs to be done to extend to women the same opportunities that men enjoy in our society. Our first responsibility is to end the abuses that exist in our own field. Women must have a fair share of the leadership of our educational system, but we have to do much more than that. The worst wrongs women suffer are the limitations placed on their ability to earn a living. Women will not have equal opportunity with men until they are encouraged and prepared to pursue as wide a choice of careers as men.

The educational system is clearly responsible for perpetuating discriminatory attitudes toward women. Educators themselves have been as much the victims and purveyors of cultural attitudes injurious to women's rights as anyone else. Therefore, within the educational

community of the State, we must now take positive action to educate women as well as men to the full potential of their ability and to see that they have access to a complete range of jobs. We must get on with the task as quickly as possible. Accordingly, we have established the following guidelines for institutions in New York State.

The overriding principle of these guidelines is that in education and employment opportunities there should be no difference between the sexes, and all practices which interfere with equal opportunities for men and women must be eliminated. The guidelines are designed to insure statewide compliance with State and Federal Civil Rights and Equal Employment Laws and the affirmative action policies of the Federal Departments of Labor and of Health, Education and Welfare.*

1. *Job Opportunities in Education.* Governing boards and executive officers of all New York educational institutions should develop, if they have not already done so, affirmative action plans, including realistic numerical goals and timetables, for the recruitment and promotion of women in professional and managerial positions.

a. Equal salaries for men and women holding the same jobs must be the rule.
b. Priority should be given to the appointment of qualified women as superintendents, principals, college presidents, and deans.

2. *Ending Sexual Stereotyping in the Elementary and Secondary Schools.*

a. Special care must be taken in elementary and secondary schools to use textbooks which do not depict men and women in stereotyped sex roles. The content of courses must be revised, where necessary, to give a balanced account of women's contributions to our civilization.
b. Every course of study, including specialized trade and technical courses, must be open equally to boys and girls. Given today's cultural attitudes, it is not enough merely to open the doors. Only a few highly motivated girls are likely to be daring enough to seek entry into fields that have been up to this time exclusively for men. It will be necessary to actively recruit girls in the trade and technical fields with the full cooperation of guidance counsellors. Community education programs should be established to enlighten parents on the need to open up career opportunities for women.

* As of this writing, the most important legal mandates on this subject are: (1) Sections 291 and 296 of the New York State Executive Law, (2) Presidential Executive Order 11246 as amended by Executive Order 11375, and (3) The Federal Equal Employment Act of 1972 which was recently enacted.

c. Inservice training must be provided for teachers, guidance counsellors and other specialists, paraprofessionals and administrators to prepare them to take an active role in encouraging women to seek careers in whatever fields are best suited to their individual talents.

3. *Equal Opportunity for Women in Higher and Professional Education.*

a. There must be no quota limitations on the admission of women in coeducational colleges, universities, and professional schools. Admission standards must be the same for men and women, and individuals who meet the qualifications for admission must be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

b. Loans, scholarships, and fellowships must be available to all students without regard to sex.

c. Colleges and universities should be responsive to the educational needs of women whose education was interrupted because of marriage and family responsibilities through the provision of special programs and by scheduling courses and programs at times that are convenient for women with families.

d. Colleges and universities should encourage adequate career opportunities for women faculty members and administrators by such arrangements as (1) authorizing maternity leaves, with guarantee of job reservation and the postponement of tenure decisions by length of leave, (2) permitting faculty members to continue their full faculty status with appropriate adjustments in salary during periods when family commitments temporarily limit their ability to teach a full schedule, and (3) eliminating nepotism rules.

Conclusion

The evidence of inequalities described in this statement clearly reflects deep-rooted discrimination in education and employment of women in our society. If the patterns of inequality are to be changed, a major shift in attitude and in willingness to take affirmative action must be made. This change must be initiated and nurtured in the educational institutions of our State, and we, therefore, ask the governing boards and executive officers of these institutions to join in taking immediate action to provide equal opportunities for women.

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